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ADDRESS

OF

HENRY R. PIERSON.

JULY 6, 1886.

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Compliments of

Henry R Pierson,

Chancellor.



ADDRESS

OF

HENRY R. PIERSON,

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK,

AT THE

OPENING OF THE 24TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION, JULY 6, 1886.

ALBANY:

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1886.

ADDRESS.

Members of the University Convocation :

As the official head of the University of the State of New York, I bid you cordial welcome to this our twenty-fourth anniversary.

You will miss the presence of Dr. Murray, the distinguished Secretary of the board, who has been compelled to seek rest, by reason of impaired health, and you will mourn with me the absence of the late courteous and scholarly Vice-Chancellor, Judge Clinton, who died soon after our last convocation. There are others also whose goodness and wisdom will make conspicuous their absence and to whom appropriate reference will be made in the course of our exercises.

The executive committee, whose duty it is to prepare the programme for the convocation, have admirably performed the task assigned them and will announce to you through their chairman, Dr. Bradley, the topics to be considered by the eminent persons selected to lead the discussions.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

We meet to day as the University of the State of New York, in the fullness of manly vigor, with the ripe experience of many years of faithful labor to aid us, and conscious pride at the magnificent results of our work in the field of education to stimulate us to renewed exertion. For more than a century the university has existed, and its records testify to the dignity of its purpose, the liberality of its plan, and to the distinguished men who have composed its members and officers, men whose official integrity has never been questioned. For nearly a quarter of that period this convocation has existed.

Need I then doubt that you have heard, but with astonishment and regret that since our last convocation the propriety of continuing the university has been called in question?

His excellency, the Governor of the State, in his annual message to the Legislature, recommended that it and the Board of Regents be abolished, because the University of the State of New York had no existence in fact and the Board of Regents was a useless body.

I do not quote all that the Governor says upon the subject, but the points stated fairly present his conclusions. I have great respect for Governor Hill. His industry, his fidelity to his convictions, his pos-

itive force both in public and private life at once distinguish him as a man of mark. I cannot but believe that some evil-minded or ill-advised person has misinformed the Governor as to some of the allegations of his indictment. Certainly, he is in error, and I believe he would not state an error if he knew it to be such.

THE UNIVERSITY.

To prove the real existence and utility of *our* university let us consider what is a university?

It is not a college. It is not so much an institution of learning as it is the center—the representative or governor of several institutions of learning. It may be a cluster of colleges, and different educational institutions each complete in itself, both as to course of study and general regulations.

The very name University would indicate a center to which all turned—itsself universal in the administration, in the union of teachers and scholars. If of Historic colleges, it is the highest, the consummation and center; if of the State, the conservator of its educational system, and made to stimulate the best and highest learning; if Ecclesiastical, the dispenser of all the learning in the church; if private, the broadest plant, and the most generous endowment for all teaching, in all the departments of human learning.

President Gilman of the Johns Hopkins University says : “ It is the business of universities not only to perpetuate the records of culture, but to bring them out in modern, timely, and intelligible interpretation, so that all may know the laws of human progress, the dangers which imperil society, and the conditions of advancing civilization.”

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY.

For illustrations, take the three distinguished universities of England — Cambridge, Oxford, and London — from which our own university may have been patterned. Let me quote for you a few thoughts and facts regarding them taken quite literally from the *Cyclopædia of Education*. Cambridge University is one of the oldest and most famous universities in England. It began its new era in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, under the title of the “Chancellors, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge”

The university is a federal republic of seventeen colleges, or eighteen with Cavendish college. Each college has its own statutes, but is subject to university law.

The legislative and executive bodies of the university are composed of members of the colleges. The executive consists of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the high steward, the commissary, the

librarian, etc. In 1858, besides the examinations held at the college, the university held *local examinations* conducted at various places. The university is a body which holds public examinations and confers degrees, the professors lecture, but can hardly be said to teach. The university buildings are numerous, including the Senate house, adjoining which is the library rich in four thousand manuscripts and containing half a million of volumes, the geological museum, and other museum and society buildings.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

Oxford University, sharing with Cambridge the pride of all England, claims to date from A. D. 872. In considering the actual state and working of this university, we must carefully distinguish between it and the colleges. The latter are corporate bodies consisting of fellows and scholars, possessing property and a building — the college proper.

The university, while technically described as consisting of the "Chancellors, Masters and Scholars," consists practically of certain fellows and heads of colleges, who fill public posts and administer public trusts. Within their own walls the members of a college are independent. The university enforces public order, offers scholarships, gives prizes, awards honors, has charge of public examinations, appoints examiners, and regulates the standard of knowledge

for university degrees, which the Vice-Chancellor confers. It has twenty colleges and four halls. Of the university officers, it will be sufficient to mention the Chancellor, the High Steward, the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctor. The first was, in old times, the ruling head of the university. He was the nominee of the Bishop of Lincoln, and the guardian of his rights and privileges. * * * At present he is little more than an ornamental appendage, the practical duties of his office being discharged by the Vice-Chancellor. * * * He is the resident head of the university. The university buildings are many and valuable : the Sheldonian Theater, where commencements are held and degrees conferred ; the Bodleian Library, one of the largest in England ; the Taylorian Institute, containing a picture gallery, etc., etc. The revenues of colleges and university together amount to £420,000 annually.

LONDON UNIVERSITY.

London University was erected by royal charter, November 28, 1836, and there is this capital difference between this university and those of Cambridge and Oxford : in the University of London, the colleges, instead of being all in one locality, are scattered over the country, some of them situated even in distant colonies, and these are called affiliated

institutions. The examinations, held by this university for the purpose of showing who is entitled to degrees, have always been of the highest order, and in 1867 a supplemental charter was obtained conveying the right to hold examinations for women.

Such is a brief description of the three great, living, successful and proudly esteemed universities of England. How do the structure, appointments, duties, responsibilities, methods, university institutions, museums, libraries, etc., etc., so far as they go, compare with our own University of the State of New York in session here, and what has been our history and the work we have accomplished?

They are the growth of centuries—we have the growth of an hundred years, beginning with the birth of the State; growing, as it has grown, with the people and from the people; always foremost in educational work; never meddling, always sustaining; and what have we accomplished?

THE BOARD OF REGENTS.

At the establishment of our State government we had one feeble college, King's College, established by royal charter, October 31, 1754. Its functions were suspended during the War of Independence and its buildings were used as a hospital. From the founding of the college till the closing of the colonial period little was done in behalf of public education.

Immediately after the revolution the number of the governors of King's College being so lessened by death and absence as to require the interposition of the Legislature, an act was passed in 1784, investing a new incorporation under the title of the Regents of the University of the State of New York, with all the rights, franchises and privileges vested in the governors of the college by its charter, and changing the name of the college to Columbia College. This act required that all the estate, real and personal, held by King's College by virtue of its charter, should be applied *solely* to the use of Columbia College, and the same act empowered the Regents to hold additional estate for the use of said college, and for the further promotion of learning, to hold other estate, real and personal; also to found schools and colleges in any part of the State, which colleges, properly founded, should be considered as composing a part of the said university.

In the first effort to establish a university, it does not seem very strange that instead of a complete university, it revived a feeble college under a new name. No sooner was this and some other kindred errors discovered than the law establishing the University of the State was amended, and as amended, with slight changes, it still remains. The amendment was the act passed in 1787, declaring that an uni-

versity be and is hereby instituted within this State, to be called and known by the name and style of the University of the State of New York. This act reduced the number of Regents, remanded Columbia college and all its estates to a board of trustees of its own, continued the power to hold property, granted the authority to incorporate colleges, made provision for the incorporation of academies, and placed both academies and colleges under the general supervision of the Regents.

In this year and subsequent to the passage of this act the first two academies were incorporated, Clinton Academy at East Hampton, and Erasmus Hall at Flatbush.

In 1793 the Regents, in their report, recommended the establishment of a general system of common schools.

In 1797, Governor George Clinton, who was also at that time the first Chancellor of the University, in his message to the legislature, urged the establishment of common schools throughout the State, and on the 9th of April in the same year a law was passed for the purpose of encouraging and maintaining such schools.

It was also due to the repeated appeals of the Regents of the University that the importance of encouraging literature by the aid of State funds was

impressed upon the Legislature and the foundation of the liberal policy of this State toward education was begun. To enable the Regents to distribute the funds intrusted to their care to those only who were entitled to them, they were empowered to require returns of the qualification of pupils to be made annually to their secretary under oath of the principal or one of the trustees of the school. In the year 1866 a committee of the Regents reported through their chairman, Lieutenant-Governor Alvord, that so long as the power of determining the qualifications of pupils entitled to share in this distribution was intrusted to the *principals or local authorities*, no uniform standard of scholarship could prevail, and scholars would be claimed in one academy whom a higher standard would exclude in another.

In accordance with the suggestions of this valuable report, in 1866, a system of examinations was established by means of printed questions, prepared at the office of the Regents and used at all the schools *simultaneously*. To make a still more efficient basis for distribution since 1870, the answer papers of the pupils have been required to be sent to the office of the Regents, where, after careful review, the successful candidate is awarded a certificate of academic scholarship, and the school is entitled to draw a *pro rata* share from the literature fund in accordance with the ordi-

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nances of the Regents. This system, known as the preliminary academic examination, has become so valuable to the schools as a test of uniform scholarship and proficiency on the part of the teacher as well as pupil, that its real purpose as a basis of distribution of State money has become of secondary importance.

HIGHER EXAMINATIONS.

Section 6, chapter 435 of Laws of 1877, authorized the Regents to establish higher examinations.

The first part of the section is *mandatory* and enjoins upon the regents the establishment of examinations in the academies and academic departments of union schools, that will furnish a suitable standard of graduation from said academies and academical departments. The second part of the section is *permissive* and authorizes the Regents to establish examinations and to confer upon successful candidates such degrees as the Regents may deem expedient.

Under this statute, as enjoined by the first part of section 6, the Regents instituted and put in operation at once, a system of examinations in the academies and academical departments of union schools, making a standard suitable for graduation therein.

The work already done under the mandatory obligation of the law of 1877 has been very great, with

the preliminary examination far exceeding any other department of work the Regents perform, and its importance to the cause of education cannot be easily over estimated.

Under its stimulating influence the advance in educational work in the academies has been marked. The statistics of the last report of this board show that there are under the charge of the Regents of the University 283 academies and academic departments of union schools, and of these 134 have been visited by the Board or its officers during the past year.

This report shows that in the years 1884-85, 72,420 answer-papers on the 40 different subjects of the preliminary and advanced examinations were received and passed upon at this office. This is no perfunctory service. Each paper is critically reviewed with a conscientious endeavor to determine its real worth requiring the assistance of many skillful and experienced persons. The total number of papers received in the years 1879-80 in the advanced branches alone was 7,515, while in the years 1884-85 it was 34,276 or nearly five times increased in as many years. The methods of preparing those papers, their distribution, the arrangement and examination after their return from the academies and academical departments, involving an immense amount of labor systematized and accomplished by a carefully organized depart-

ment, invite the examination and consideration of every lover of learning in the State, and are the pride and promise of the University of the State.

In 1878 a committee was appointed by the Regents to devise a plan for the examinations provided for in the second part of that section of the act. The committee, of which Prof. W. D. Wilson, of Cornell University, was chairman, reported to the Regents at their annual meeting in January, 1880, a plan which embraced post-graduate courses of study, the successful completion of which would entitle the candidate to the degree of Master of Arts, or Doctor of Philosophy.

This plan is still under consideration by the Board and its officers, but the continued and astonishing growth of the academic examinations has precluded the possibility of performing so important a trust with the means at our command, and the Regents have thus far been unwilling to ask the requisite appropriation.

TEACHERS' CLASSES.

Another great work promoted and carried into successful execution by the Regents of the University is that of supplying common schools with competent teachers trained in the academies under our charge, with special reference to the duties they will be expected to perform.

In 1855, the Legislature provided for an annual appropriation of \$30,000, for instruction in academies and union schools, of classes in the science and practice of common school teaching.

It is made by law the duty of the Regents to designate the academies and union schools in which the instruction shall be given, and they are carefully discharging that obligation.

The report of the Regents for the years 1884 and 1885 shows that teachers' classes were organized in 145 schools, with 2,348 pupils. The classes have the benefit of an instructor and inspector, selected and appointed by the Regents, who has special qualifications to instruct in the art of teaching, the best methods of imparting knowledge and promoting the best interests of our common schools.

The work is very well done, and has the co-operation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the county common school commissioners.

If the number of teachers annually instructed, between two and three thousand, is considered, and the fact that this instruction is specific and systematic in its purpose and methods, the good done will be better appreciated.

Testimonials of qualification are issued to those who have proven their ability by a faithful apprenticeship, and the results have shown the system to

be one of the most efficient factors in the State educational system.

THE GROWTH OF COLLEGES.

The one hundred years that have elapsed since the establishment of the university have been signalized throughout by such evidences of the wisdom and prudence of its Regents in behalf of educational advancement, that now from the one feeble college placed under its charge when incorporated, the statistics of colleges in the Regents' report of January last show that there were subject to their visitation during the year 1884-85, 45 institutions with 785 instructors, 11,702 students and 1,571 graduates. The total value of college property was \$23,164,602.83, and the yearly expenditure \$1,787,391.51.

The same report shows that most of these colleges were visited by the Regents or their officers during the year.

I may also add that during the past year several important changes in the administration of our colleges have occurred, and many magnificent donations testify to the continued and generous devotion of our people to education. The presidency of Cornell University, made vacant by the retirement of that ripe scholar and earnest worker, Hon. Andrew D. White, has been filled by the election of Dr. Charles K. Adams, of Michigan University. The university

has after prolonged litigation in the Surrogate's Court received a favorable decision in the matter of the Fiske will by which it was granted property valued at about \$1,500,000. Vassar College has conferred its presidency on Dr. James M. Taylor, of Providence. Union College has acquired possession of \$20,000 bequeathed by the late James Brown, Esq., of New York city to Mrs. Nott during her life-time with remainder to the college. The trustees have not yet permanently filled the presidency of the college, but the interests of the institution are ably cared for by the acting president, Judge Landon. We have to chronicle a serious loss to Hobart College in the destruction by fire of its valuable library, but through the energy of President Potter and the friends of Hobart, provision has been made for its replacement and for further additions to the college. The Vanderbilt family has supplemented the princely generosity of their father by a gift of \$250,000 to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the City of New York. This sum is intended to erect and maintain a building to be called "the Vanderbilt Clinic."

The faculty of Medicine of the University of the City of New York have received through Dr. Loomis from a donor, whose name is known only to him, the generous sum of \$100,000. Plans for enlargement of their building and increased facilities have already been begun.

There are doubtless many other items worthy of announcement at this time, but I have given such as have come to my notice in advance of the receipt of the annual reports for the past collegiate year.

THE UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION.

These convocations have lasted for nearly a quarter of a century, with an unbroken record and an increasing interest.

I venture to say that no more useful or interesting record of any educational body, certainly in this State, if in any other, can be found. These convocations have been conducted with the utmost care, with the wisest council, and the most careful selection of topics, and their proceedings are sought for everywhere, by teachers and scholars.

Again, read the record of the proceedings of those convocations and I venture to say, that no such collection of papers upon the subject of higher education can be found. Their record is our just pride, and will be preserved in the archives of the State when we who live shall have been forgotten. Are we to consider this Convocation of the University a useless appendage when there were present at our last session eight college Presidents, and thirty-two professors, sixty-six principals of schools of academic grade and twenty-four instructors, five normal school principals and eight instructors therein, thirteen superintendents or commissioners, and thirty-one others

interested in educational work — in all 187 active and distinguished workers who have no incentive to call them here but their earnest desire to give and receive what aid they can toward promoting the educational interests of the State ?

DEGREES.

It is true the university has not conferred many degrees, because that was a concurrent power with the colleges, and it has been thought wise by the Regents to leave the exercise of that function mainly to the colleges. Should we be able to establish the post-graduate course, to which I have already made reference, then the university will hold examinations and confer degrees without in any way encroaching on the prerogatives of the colleges.

By this brief statement of the history of the University of the State of New York, I think I have proved in its past and present, that the university was legally and fairly established as the first educational body of this State, and the duties of the Regents, which were carefully defined, have been frequently increased and have been well performed. The University of the State of New York has had a real existence, has done active work, and has performed all the services usually belonging to universities in this or any other country during the period of its exist-

ence. The corporate name of the board is not a deception and should not mislead, and the Board of Regents have done and are doing too valuable a service in the cause of State education to be abolished or consolidated with any other department.

And yet his Excellency the Governor says :

“ I think there is no necessity for the official existence of the Board of Regents. Its corporate name is deceptive and misleading. Its powers and duties can be intrusted to other and appropriate hands without detriment to the public interests, thereby saving to the State the annual expense of its maintenance and dispensing with the anomaly of a two-headed educational system and the confusion of a divided and sometimes conflicting superintendence in the same public schools.”

There is no two-headed educational system, for each system is entirely distinct in plan and purpose, as it is in organization, there is not and never has been any confusion, nor has there been any conflict; on the contrary, there has been the utmost harmony.

But, gentlemen of the convocation, I am not here to personally defend the members of the Board of Regents: I have given you something of their work and their history. They began when the State began; they have grown with the growth of the Commonwealth. No institution of the State has been more

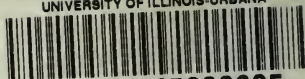
stable in its character, more carefully confined to its legitimate and primitive functions, and no more honorable list of names can be found than these Regents of the University, who have performed a gratuitous and most valuable service. I point to those who have gone before, and to those of my present associates with great personal pride. For myself I claim nothing, at best my work is nearly done ; it has been a pleasant and dignified and most honorable duty ; it has given me delightful companionship, and some good opportunities to do the State some service. It has been made very pleasant and void of vexations, because the board has no pay, no politics, no patronage. I am ready to retire, but I pray I may never see so pure and so clean an institution that has lived a century without a fleck or a stain now thrown into the dirty water of party politics.

Gentlemen — I thank you for your patience. I felt it my duty to be thus explicit. I have no malice ; no feeling but to improve this opportunity of declaring my sentiments on so important a subject, as it may be my last meeting with you. I have prepared this paper amid much suffering and weakness, and I feel that I am entitled to your indulgence.

Finally, I cannot close my remarks in anyway so appropriately as by quoting from a recently pub-

lished and admirable State paper by Governor Hill, in which he says : "All change is not reform. Unless a change is based upon some sound principle, and is capable of some practical good result, it ought not to be entered upon."

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



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